

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 10415 01 OF 02 222029Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SY-05 MCT-01 HA-05 TRSE-00 /070 W
-----128133 222110Z /73

R 221911Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2930
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 10415

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: THE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION IN SPAIN

1. SUMMARY. THE MEDIA HAS EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE PRE-
OCCUPATION OVER A RECENT SPATE OF PUBLIC ORDER DISRUPTIONS
WHICH LEFT TWO DEAD (MALAGA, CANARIES) AND THE MURDER
LAST WEEK OF AN IRUN CITY COUNCILMAN. POLITICAL ASSASSINA-
TIONS FROM BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT ARE STILL, IN FACT,
PART OF THE LANDSCAPE HERE. PERSONAL SECURITY IS A SOME-
WHAT GREATER PREOCCUPATION IN RECENT MONTHS, PERHAPS IN
PART AS A RESULT OF THE RELEASE OF SOME CONGENITAL
DELINQUENTS UNDER THE AMNESTY, IN PART BECAUSE OF
INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT, AND IN PART BECAUSE OF RELAXA-
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PAGE 02 MADRID 10415 01 OF 02 222029Z

TION OF AUTHORITY. BUT LEADERS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES
ARE NOT OVERLY CONCERNED, CONSIDERING THESE EVENTS
ANOTHER INSTALLMENT ON THE PRICE SPAIN MUST PAY FOR DECOM-
PRESSION FROM AUTHORITARIANISM. IN FACT, LARGELY AS THE
RESULT OF THE GOVT-OPPOSITION CONSENSUS ON PUBLIC ORDER
QUESTIONS AND THE CONTINUING EFFORTS OF ALL MAJOR GROUP-
INGS AND THE GOVT TO ADDRESS THOSE ISSUES UNDERLYING MANY

OF THE COUNTRY'S PUBLIC ORDER DIFFICULTIES, SUCH AS AUTONOMY AND THE RE-ORIENTATION OF THE POLICE, SPAIN'S PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS REMAIN WITHIN TOLERABLE LIMITS. THEY SHOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO, AT LEAST OVER THE SHORT TERM, BARRING SOME UNPREDICTABLE ACT AGAINST A MAJOR FIGURE. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLIC ORDER IS ONE OF THE SPANISH TRANSITION'S MOST VULNERABLE PRESSURE POINTS. VIOLENT CLASHES BETWEEN DEMONSTRATORS AND POLICE, SOMETIMES RESULTING IN FATALITIES RAISE TEMPERATURES ALL AROUND, MAKE THE POLICE JITTERY (THEREBY OFTEN SPARKING FURTHER VIOLENCE), AND ROIL THE POLITICAL WATERS GENERALLY. KIDNAPPINGS AND ASSASSINATIONS OF BUSINESSMEN, POLICE, OR PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE AN EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED EFFECT, ALTHOUGH SUCH ACTS HAVE THUS FAR NOT GENERATED CYCLES OF VIOLENCE OR MORE BROAD-SCALE THREATS TO PUBLIC ORDER. THESE DISRUPTIONS ALSO CHIP AWAY AT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN GOVT AND THE TRANSITION PROCESS ON WHICH SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL EVOLUTION IS BASED. WE HEAR CONSTANT GRUMBLING ABOUT THEM, PARTICULARLY FROM THE WELL-TO-DO AND FROM RIGHTIST MILITARY ELEMENTS.

3. HOWEVER, THESE SPASMS OF VIOLENCE HAVE STILL NOT FUNDAMENTALLY THREATENED THE TRANSITION PROCESS, WHICH IS BASED ON A BROAD POLITICAL CONSENSUS AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MADRID 10415 01 OF 02 222029Z

ACTIVE SUPPORT OF ALL MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS (PCE). MOREOVER, IT DOES NOT APPEAR AT PRESENT THAT MORE OF THE SAME (WHICH IS ALMOST INEVITABLE) WILL CONSTITUTE A SERIOUS DANGER TO SPAIN'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION, ALTHOUGH IT OBVIOUSLY WILL BE WORRISOME.

4. THIS VIOLENCE HAS NOT BEEN FUNDAMENTALLY DESTABILIZING BECAUSE IT HAS TENDED TO UNIFY, RATHER THAN DIVIDE, THE MAJOR SPANISH POLITICAL GROUPINGS, ALL OF WHOM CONSIDER THEMSELVES THREATENED BY ANY DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC ORDER WHICH COULD POLARIZE SPANISH POLITICS AND BRING THE MILITARY BACK INTO SPANISH POLITICS. THIS CONSENSUS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING PUBLIC ORDER AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE (ALTHOUGH WITH PREDICTABLE DIFFERENCES AS TO THE APPROPRIATE MODALITIES) HAS LED TO BROAD COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVT AND OPPOSITION ON PUBLIC ORDER-RELATED QUESTIONS.

5. THIS COLLABORATION EXTENDS FROM COORDINATED EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH POLITICAL PROBLEMS FROM WHICH MANY THREATS TO PUBLIC ORDER DERIVE, SUCH AS THE AUTONOMY ISSUE AND THE NOW LARGELY RESOLVED EXPANSION OF FREEDOMS AND POLITICAL AMNESTY QUESTIONS, TO CONCERTED ATTEMPTS TO BREAK OR HEAD OFF CYCLES OF VIOLENCE THROUGH CALLS FOR CALM, A MUTING OF POST-CONFRONTATION DEBATE OVER POLICE

OVERREACTION, AND THE ESCHEWAL BY THE PARLIAMENTARY LEFT OF MASS MOBILIZATIONS AT DIFFICULT JUNCTURES. THE GOVT ALSO APPEARS TO BE HAVING SOME SUCCESS IN INCULCATING A MORE LEVEL-HEADED, FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARD PUBLIC ORDER QUESTIONS ON THE PART OF PROVINCIAL-LEVEL OFFICIALS AND IN RE-ORIENTATING THE POLICE TOWARD THEIR NEW AND UNACCUSTOMED ROLE AS PROTECTORS OF BASIC FREEDOMS.(PSOE SECGEN FELIPE GONZALEZ CONCEDED THAT THE GOVT WAS DOING A RELATIVELY GOOD JOB IN THIS AREA DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR.) IN THIS MANNER,

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PAGE 01 MADRID 10415 02 OF 02 222033Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MADRID 10415

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

BOTH GOVT AND OPPOSITION HAVE MOVED TO ISOLATE THOSE ON THE FAR-LEFT AND FAR-RIGHT WITH AN INTEREST IN UNRAVELING THE TRANSITION PROCESS. IN FACT, IN SPITE OF RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS IN MALAGA (MADRID 9708), THE CANARIES (MADRID 10076), AND THE BASQUE PROVINCES (MADRID 10226), THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE COUNTRY IS BASICALLY CALM.

6. DURING A DEC. 20 CALL ON CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES VICE PRESIDENT LUIS GOMEZ LLORENTE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOCIALIST

LEADER--WHO IS CONSIDERED TO BE ON THE FAR LEFT OF THE
PSOE SPECTRUM--TOLD OUR POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT HE
VIEWED THE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION IN MOST OF THE COUNTRY
AS BASICALLY SOUND AND TRANQUIL. ONLY THE BASQUE
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PAGE 02 MADRID 10415 02 OF 02 222033Z

PROVINCES, AS USUAL, AND INCREASINGLY THE CANARIES WERE
SOURCES OF REAL CONCERN. IN BOTH CASES, HE SAID, THE
POLICE WOULD HAVE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT WHILE THE UNDER-
LYING ISSUES--AUTONOMY IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND BOTH
AUTONOMY AND SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISLOCATION IN THE
CANARIES--WERE DEALT WITH. EXTREMIST DEPRADATIONS IN THE
BASQUE PROVINCES WERE NOT ABOUT TO GO AWAY (ETA MIGHT EVEN .
SET ITS SIGHTS ON A BASQUE PSOE LEADER, LIKE ENRIQUE
MUGICA, HE SAID), AND REACTION TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN
EITHER REGION OBVIOUSLY COULD LEAD TO DISRUPTIONS ELSE-
WHERE. BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION
GENERALLY WAS GOOD, AND THAT INCLUDED SUCH TRADITIONALLY
VOLATILE AREAS AS ASTURIAS, WHICH GOMEZ LLORENTE
REPRESENTS IN THE CORTES, AS WELL AS THE UNIVERSITIES,
WHERE THERE WAS LESS UNREST THAN DURING FRANCO'S LAST
YEARS.

7. IN A LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR
LATER ON DEC. 20, UCD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER ARTURO
MOYA--WHO IS IN CHARGE OF UCD PREPARATION FOR THE UPCOMING
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS--WAS EVEN MORE UPBEAT THAN GOMEZ
LLORENTE. MOYA SAID THE GOVT WOULD CONTINUE TO REMIND
THE PEOPLE THAT POLITICAL VIOLENCE BEGAN LONG BEFORE
FRANCO PASSED FROM THE SCENE, AND WAS NOT BROUGHT ON BY
DEMOCRATIZATION. MOREOVER, THE INTERIOR MINISTRY WOULD
SOON RELEASE STATISTICS THAT WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT COMMON
CRIMES HAD ACTUALLY DROPPED OFF IN 1977 AS COMPARED WITH
1976, MOYA SAID.

8. IN SUM, OUR VIEW IS THUS THAT SO LONG AS PRESENT
CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO OBTAIN, PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS IN
SPAIN WILL REMAIN WITHIN TOLERABLE LIMITS. THIS PRE-
SUPPOSES THAT THE GOVT-OPPOSITION CONSENSUS ON THIS
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PAGE 03 MADRID 10415 02 OF 02 222033Z

QUESTION WILL BE MAINTAINED AND THAT THE MAJOR PARTIES
WILL CONTINUE TO WORK COOPERATIVELY TOWARD SOLUTIONS
TO THE UNDERLYING POLITICAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY
BASQUE AUTONOMY. THE GOVT. ALSO WILL HAVE TO PERSIST
WITH ITS EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM THE COUNTRY'S PUBLIC ORDER

FORCES INTO THE SERVANTS OF DEMOCRACY--NO EASY TASK.
FURTHERMORE, KEEPING THESE PROBLEMS WITHIN ACCEPTABLE
BOUNDS ALSO WILL DEPEND TO SOME EXTENT ON MANY OTHER
ISSUES, SUCH AS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVT'S STRINGENT
ECONOMIC PROGRAM, WHOSE OUTCOME IS AS YET UNCERTAIN.
CONSEQUENTLY, WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY THE
TROUBLESOME PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION IN THE LARGER CONTEXT
OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FORCES WHICH INFLUENCE IT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MADRID10415
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770478-0636
Format: TEL
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771227/aaaaawdt.tel
Line Count: 233
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f71549fe-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 147528
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION IN SPAIN
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f71549fe-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009